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Muttaqi urges host countries to give returnees time to settle affairs

KABUL: The country's acting Foreign Minister, Mawlawi Amir Khan Muttaqi, urged host nations to allow returnees time to settle affairs, according to a statement from the ministry on Saturday.

Muttaqi made remarks in a meeting with Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the statement said.

Discussing the challenges faced by Afghan returnees deported from Iran and Pakistan, both sides exchanged views on the urgent humanitarian needs of forcibly returned Afghans and mechanisms for their support and assistance.

Minister Muttaqi stressed that returnees should be given adequate time in host countries to settle personal affairs, including the settlement of assets and property transfer, especially given the harsh summer conditions.

He reaffirmed the Islamic Emirate's commitment to supporting returnees while emphasizing the country's pressing need for increased international assistance to address widespread humanitarian challenges.

Meanwhile, Grandi assured that UNHCR would continue to closely monitor the situation of returnees and offer support through all available means.

He reaffirmed UNHCR's decades-long partnership with Afghanistan, pledging ongoing assistance to Afghan refugees and returnees.

The Kabul Times

Mawlavi Kabir urges West to step toward IEA recognition

KABUL: Mawlavi Abdul Kabir, the country's acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriations, urged the Western countries to take concrete steps toward recognizing the Islamic Emirate, the ministry said in a statement the other day.

Speaking at a meeting with Robert Dickson, chargé d'affaires of the UK, and Richard Lindsay, the new UK representative for Afghanistan, Mawlavi Kabir called on the United Kingdom to assist in building residential settlements for Afghan returnees, according to the statement.

The urgent need for humanitarian aid for Afghans forcibly returned from Pakistan and Iran has been discussed in the meeting, the statement said.

The British chargé d'affaires reaffirmed his country's commitment to continue providing humanitarian support and emphasized the importance of dialogue with the Islamic Emirate.

The UK's Special Envoy for Afghanistan pointed out that resolving the ongoing challenges requires constructive international engagement.

Mawlavi Abdul Kabir expressed appreciation for the UK's past contributions while noting that the Islamic Emirate is actively working to support returnees by providing essential services at border crossings.

He highlighted the immediate need for assistance to assist returnees in reintegrating into their communities, urging that humanitarian aid must remain free from political influences.

He proposed that by constructing dedicated settlements, the cycle of repeated migration could be mitigated.

The acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriations underscored that the Islamic Emirate has taken steps to address international concerns and called for Western recognition of the Islamic Emirate, urging that countries like the UK should not delay further.

The Kabul Times

420 cadets graduate in Maidan Wardak, join national police

KABUL: A total of 420 newly graduated cadets have joined the country's national police after completing a period of ideological, professional, tactical, technical, and public relations skills training in Maidan Wardak province, the Ministry of Interior Affairs said in a statement Saturday.

Addressing the graduation ceremony, the relevant officials, while appreciating the efforts of the officials in the field of education, urged the newly graduated cadets to uphold, serve and preserve and strengthen the Islamic system and never be deceived by enemy propaganda.

After receiving certificates, the police cadets vowed to serve the people and tighten their security everywhere in the country, the statement said.

The Kabul Times

Gold mine extraction in Takhar: Badri vows area residents prioritizion

KABUL: Mullah Hedayatullah Badri, the acting Minister of Mines and Petroleum, officially initiated the extraction of the first block of the gold mine in the Chah-e-Aab district of Takhar province, the ministry said in a statement Saturday. Minister Badri emphasized that the locals would be given precedence in terms of employment opportunities.

Previously, the relevant officials stated that mining operations across Afghanistan were conducted in a largely unregulated and informal manner before the return of the Islamic Emirate.

However, the current mining operations are now being carried out in accordance with established legal frameworks and under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum.

The Kabul Times

UK reaffirms supporting Afghanistan's health sector, Dickson

KABUL: British Charge d'Affaires in Kabul Robert Dickson reaffirmed his country's commitment to supporting the health sector in Afghanistan. In a meeting with public health acting minister Mawlavi Noor Jalal Jalali on Saturday, Dickson also spoke about empowering of healthcare in Afghanistan, priorities of the health ministry, capacity building and supporting vulnerable people including addicts, cancer patients, maternity, according to the statement. Jalali appreciated the UK's ongoing assistance in the health sector and called for continued cooperation, particularly under the leadership of the new UK representative.

The Kabul Times

Over 200 development projects implemented last year, Nazari

KABUL: Abdul Latif Nazari, Deputy Minister of Economy, said on Saturday that 201 development projects worth $37.8 million have been implemented nationwide over the past year.

Presenting the ministry's annual achievements at the Government Media and Information Center, Nazari added that the projects have been implemented in coordination with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations and through both domestic and international organizations, according to a statement from the ministry.

Referring to the number of NGOs, he noted that 2,640 non-Emirati organizations are currently operating in the country across various sectors.

Nazari further said that last year, following approval from the High Evaluation Commission, 140 domestic and 6 foreign organizations were granted operational licenses, raising the total number of non-Emirati organizations active in Afghanistan to 2,640.

"To ensure transparency, streamline operations, and improve project execution, the ministry has developed a dedicated digital system," the statement quoted him as saying.

Earlier, the Deputy Minister of Economy had called on NGOs to shift their focus from humanitarian aid to more development-oriented projects to support long-term national growth. **The Kabul Times**

Afghan, UNHCR officials hold talks on returnees

KABUL: Shaikh Kalimullah Fani, the Finance and Administration Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriations, met with Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, discussing returnees, the ministry said in a statement Saturday.

Speaking at the meeting, Fani highlighted the urgent needs and challenges faced by Afghan returnees, particularly those forcibly repatriated from neighboring countries.

He expressed hope that the visit of the UNHCR Commissioner to Kabul would play a pivotal role in mobilizing humanitarian assistance, attracting donor attention, and fostering meaningful collaboration in addressing the returnees' challenges, according to the statement.

Filippo Grandi stated that his visit aims to engage with Afghan officials to tackle the challenges faced by returning refugees and collectively find solutions for them.

He acknowledged the significant challenge posed by the mass repatriation of refugees from neighboring countries and assured that UNHCR will persist in its efforts and support as previously pledged.

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Food for thought

Today's generation guarantees our bright future

IEA committed to accountability

In the contemporary era, as nations are in dire need of transparency and accountability more than ever, the Islamic Emirate's initiative to annually present the achievements of ministries and major directorates is a commendable step that strengthens the relationship and bridges the gaps between the system and the nation.

This process officially began; an event that not only marks the beginning of a new chapter in government information but also demonstrates the system's commitment to accountability and transparency towards the people.

By presenting key points of its activities, programs, and achievements, each ministry should keep the people informed about what has been done during the year.

In addition to strengthening public trust, this transparency will also create a healthy atmosphere of competition among government institutions for supplying better service.

On the other hand, the media also plays an effective role in accurately conveying this information to the public and can thus create a strong bridge between the system and society.

Transparency is not only a sign of good intentions of the government organs but also a necessity for improving management, preventing corruption, and moving towards national progress. When people know what their officials are doing, how they are spending resources, and what their plans are for the future, hope and motivation for greater participation in national affairs increase.

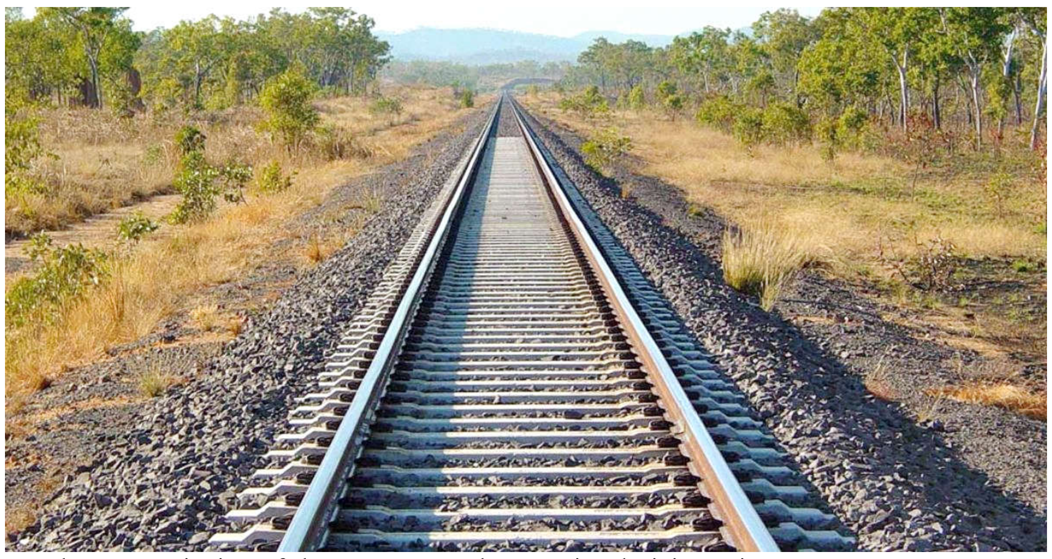
This initiative should be strengthened and become an institutionalized tradition.

Also, it is necessary that this process is not limited to presenting successes only, but also sharing challenges, shortcomings, and reform plans with the public in order to obtain a more comprehensive view of the existing realities.

Anyway, this step should be appreciated, as continuing this trend, paying attention to accurate content, and real participation of the media and the people lead the country towards better and more popular governance.

It is hoped that this initiative will be the beginning of a clear path towards a sound interaction between the system and the nation.

Trans-Afghan railway; a pathway to regional prosperity and integration



The recent signing of the trilateral agreement between Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan to conduct a feasibility study for the Trans-Afghan Railway marks a major milestone in the region's journey toward economic integration, connectivity, and shared prosperity.

This project, long envisioned but delayed by instability, now holds renewed promise in a time when regional cooperation is increasingly vital.

The proposed railway aims to connect Central Asia with South Asia through Afghanistan, providing a much-needed land route that could significantly reduce transportation costs, cut delivery times, and open new markets for landlocked countries like Uzbekistan.

For Afghanistan, which lies at the heart of this corridor, the railway presents more than just a logistical benefit; it offers a strategic opportunity to become a regional transit hub, boosting its economy through trade facilitation, infrastructure development, and employment generation.

Afghanistan's location has always held immense geopolitical value.

But this potential has remained largely untapped due to decades of conflict and instability. With greater regional interest and political will, the Trans-Afghan Railway offers a chance to reshape that narrative—transforming Afghanistan from a battleground to a bridge between regions.

Beyond economics, the initiative symbolizes a deepening of political trust and a convergence of mutual interests among Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan. It marks a significant shift from past dynamics of isolation and uncertainty toward a new era of constructive engagement and cooperative diplomacy. By placing infrastructure at the heart of their partnership, the three nations are laying the groundwork not just for trade and transit but for long-term regional stability and integration.

This trilateral railway agreement is more than a logistical undertaking, it is a declaration of shared intent to move forward together.

It represents a commitment to building bridges, both literal and diplomatic, in a region that has often been defined by division.

While the road ahead includes complex technical assessments, security concerns, and financial coordination, the very act of reaching consensus on such a transformative project signals a collective readiness to overcome obstacles in pursuit of a common vision.

To ensure its success, sustained political cooperation, international support, and transparent planning will be essential. If pursued with vision and coordination, the Trans-Afghan Railway could become a flagship model of how connectivity breeds peace, development, and unity in one of the world's most strategically important regions.

Therefore, it is significantly vital for the Islamic Emirate to attract foreign partners in launching and successfully implementing such vital economic and development initiatives in the country, particularly large-scale infrastructure projects like the Trans-Afghan Railway. These types of regional connectivity ventures hold immense potential not only for Afghanistan's internal development but also for its broader role in facilitating regional integration and economic cooperation across Central and South Asia.

To achieve this, the Islamic Emirate has been making efforts to build a stable, transparent, and investor-friendly environment that encourages long-term collaboration. This includes ensuring the safety of investments, offering legal protections for foreign companies, and establishing clear and consistent policies regarding trade, tariffs, and transit rights. By doing so, Afghanistan can position itself as a reliable partner in the eyes of international stakeholders and financial institutions.

Foreign partnerships are especially important given the scale, complexity, and technical requirements of projects like the Trans-Afghan Railway. The involvement of countries like Uzbekistan and Pakistan provides a strong foundation, but to ensure sustainability and success, the project also needs the backing of major international development agencies, financial institutions, and private investors with expertise in railway construction, logistics, and operations.

In addition to providing funding and technical expertise, foreign partners offer valuable experience in project management, adherence to international environmental standards, and effective community engagement strategies. Their involvement can significantly enhance the quality and sustainability of major development initiatives.

Recognizing this, the Islamic Emirate is well-positioned to strengthen diplomatic outreach and economic diplomacy, actively engaging with multilateral platforms and regional cooperation frameworks. By doing so, Afghanistan can secure broader support and inclusive participation, ensuring long-term success and regional integration through shared commitment and mutual benefit.

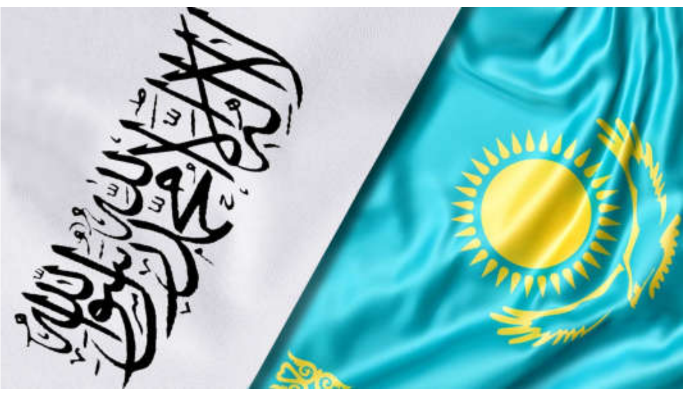
Furthermore, the benefits of such projects go beyond transportation. They can create thousands of jobs, stimulate local businesses, increase government revenues, and contribute to long-term economic stability. The Islamic Emirate must ensure that Afghan citizens are trained and prepared to participate in these projects through skills development programs and technical education initiatives.

This will allow for the creation of a skilled workforce that can sustain and expand such infrastructure over time.

In conclusion, attracting foreign partners to launch and support essential economic and development projects is not just an option for Afghanistan; it is a strategic priority. The Islamic Emirate has shown growing interest in regional connectivity and infrastructure development, and continued engagement with international partners will help turn these aspirations into reality. With vision, strategic planning, and a spirit of constructive cooperation, Afghanistan can position itself as a key bridge between Central and South Asia, contributing to peace, prosperity, and regional integration.

Nesar Ahmad Tareq

Kabul-Astana air route opens new chapter in regional trade and connectivity



In today's fast-changing global environment, countries increasingly turn to economic diplomacy and transit connectivity to assert their regional economic and political positioning.

Against this backdrop, recent discussions between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan about launching direct flights and enhancing cooperation in transportation and trade mark the dawn of a deeper strategic relationship.

This collaboration has the potential to bring Afghanistan closer than ever to regional integration while reducing geopolitical isolation.

The meeting between Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Road Transport and senior officials from Kazakhstan's Transport Ministry went far beyond initiating direct flights between Kabul and Astana.

It encompassed a comprehensive set of agreements spanning international transport, joint investment ventures, rail and road trade development, and sustained cooperation frameworks.

These initiatives leverage both nations' regional relevance, geographic proximity, and complementary economic needs, opening competitive opportunities for mutual growth.

For decades, Afghanistan has faced chronic shortages in transit infrastructure and limited connectivity.

The lack of reliable air and land routes to neighboring economies has been a bottleneck to economic growth and export expansion.

Direct flights with Astana promise to not only streamline business travel and speed up cargo movement, but also foster confidence among Kazakh investors and traders contemplating entry into Afghanistan's market.

On its side, Kazakhstan — one of the strongest economies in Central Asia — is aiming to expand southward trade corridors and access broader regional markets.

Afghanistan could emerge as a natural transit route for this expansion, contingent on maintaining relative stability and continuing infrastructure development.

Kazakhstan is currently one of Afghanistan's principal suppliers of wheat and flour. Bilateral trade in food products, metals, construction materials, and petroleum derivatives is steadily rising.

Talks to boost trade volumes to USD 3 billion signal both nations' determination to forge durable and resilient economic ties.

Economically, Kazakhstan is well-positioned to be a valuable partner for Afghanistan in transferring transit-sector expertise, technology, and infrastructure management. Collaborative railway and highway projects, the creation of joint transport companies, and coordination on customs and transport tariffs provide tangible avenues for shared benefit. At first glance, launching direct flights may appear to be a technical aviation initiative. However, it holds deeper diplomatic and economic symbolism.

After years of relative isolation, Afghanistan's leadership seeks to reintegrate the nation into Central and South Asia's economic frameworks through expanded air connectivity with regional neighbors. The Kabul–Astana air link is not merely a new route—it represents Afghanistan's return to the collaborative economic landscape of the region.

This direct flight corridor sends a clear signal: Afghanistan is not just interested in regional engagement—it is prepared to take real, actionable steps to realize that engagement.

It also offers Afghanistan's private sector an opportunity to directly penetrate the Kazakh market, enabling more competitive product offerings and fostering commercial relationships.

These promising opportunities are not without obstacles. Several key challenges must be strategically addressed:

- Coordination Gaps in Afghanistan: Fragmented administrative execution among Afghan institutions, inefficient domestic transport routes, and weak customs and logistics infrastructure might undermine progress.

See P4

The escalating water crisis in Kabul; a looming humanitarian catastrophe

Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan and home to over six million residents, is facing a deepening water crisis that threatens to become one of the most severe urban humanitarian disasters of the modern era. What was once a thriving city now faces the stark possibility of becoming the first capital to run completely out of water by the year 2030. The crisis is not the result of a single issue but a culmination of overlapping factors—climate change, rapid population growth, unregulated extraction, and weak infrastructure—working together to push the city's water supply past its limits.

The city has seen an alarming drop in its groundwater table, with some estimates showing a decline of 25 to 30 meters in the past two decades. Natural recharge through snow and rainfall is no longer sufficient to replenish what is being extracted daily. Kabul currently consumes tens of millions of cubic meters of water more than it can sustainably recharge every year. With over 120,000 unregulated private wells scattered across the city, residents and industries alike draw groundwater at an unsustainable pace. Many of these wells have already run dry, leaving families to rely on expensive water tankers that deliver unregulated and sometimes unsafe water to city neighborhoods.

Climate change has worsened the situation. Years of drought and warmer winters have led to reduced snowfall in the Hindu Kush mountains—historically Kabul's primary source of groundwater recharge. The melting of glaciers and a shift in seasonal precipitation patterns have drastically diminished the natural replenishment of the city's aquifers. Between October 2023 and January 2024, Kabul received only 45–60% of its average precipitation. Without snowmelt and consistent rainfall, groundwater levels continue to plummet.

Compounding the issue is widespread contamination. Kabul lacks a centralized sewage treatment system, and as a result, human waste, industrial pollutants, and chemicals seep into the soil and mix with groundwater. Surveys indicate that up to 80% of the city's groundwater is now polluted, making it unsafe for drinking and cooking. This has led to increased rates of waterborne diseases and long-term health complications for residents. The poorest are hit hardest, often unable to afford cleaner water alternatives, placing them at greater risk.

The governance challenges in addressing this crisis are immense. Much of Kabul's water infrastructure dates back to the 1970s and is now inadequate for the city's ballooning population. Since the collapse of Afghanistan's previous government in 2021, international funding has slowed, and humanitarian aid remains under-delivered. Of the hundreds of millions pledged for water infrastructure and crisis response, only a small fraction has actually reached the ground. Institutions responsible for water regulation have limited enforcement power, allowing private drilling and water selling to continue unchecked.

The human impact of this crisis is staggering. Families are now spending up to 30% of their income just to buy water. Some must walk hours each day to collect water from the few remaining sources. Women and children, in particular, carry the burden, missing school and other opportunities in the process. In informal settlements around the city, residents face daily choices between drinking unsafe water or going without. Water-related stress is also contributing to rising tensions among communities, especially in overcrowded districts. Food security is threatened too, as farmers around Kabul struggle to irrigate their crops. A 40% decline in local agricultural productivity is projected by 2035 if water access continues to deteriorate.

Experts warn that if no major interventions occur, Kabul could face mass displacement. The UN has forecasted that by 2030, over 2 million residents may be forced to flee the city in search of water, creating a massive refugee crisis both inside and outside of Afghanistan. Already, some families are migrating to rural areas or to provinces where wells are still functioning, though this too is unsustainable.

While the situation is dire, there are still possible solutions—if acted upon quickly. The Afghan government and international partners have proposed projects like diverting water from the Panjshir River to Kabul, which could serve up to two million people. Dams such as Shah wa Arus and Shahtoot have been planned to help with storage and recharge, though both have faced delays due to funding and political hurdles. Beyond infrastructure, regulating borehole drilling, improving water pricing and metering, and treating wastewater are critical steps. Public education campaigns on water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and mindful usage must also be expanded.

However, time is running out. Each passing year without meaningful action brings Kabul closer to irreversible ecological and humanitarian collapse. The crisis is not just about water; it is about survival, dignity, and the right to live in a city that can meet its residents' most basic needs. For the people of Kabul, water is not just a health issue—it is the foundation of stability, security, and life itself. Making water access a political, economic, and humanitarian priority is no longer optional—it is urgent. **Sayed Sharif**

Afghanistan's agricultural future hinges on embracing industrial development for long-term prosperity

Afghanistan's economy remains deeply rooted in agriculture, with the majority of its population dependent on farming and gardening for their livelihoods. However, despite the sector's central role, it consistently fails to generate sufficient income for those who rely on it. Farmers invest significant time, energy, and resources into cultivating crops, yet their efforts often yield disappointing financial returns.

A key reason for this is the volatile nature of local markets, which frequently experience price crashes—particularly during harvest seasons—leaving farmers unable to recoup their production costs.

Each year, Afghan farmers and gardeners await the harvest with high hopes, expecting that their hard work will translate into profitable returns. Unfortunately, due to poor market infrastructure, oversupply, and lack of access to broader markets, the prices of fruits and vegetables often drop drastically.

This forces farmers to sell their produce at low prices, sometimes even below the cost of production, resulting in little to no profit.

The outcome is a continuous cycle of financial struggle that hinders progress and discourages long-term investment in the sector.

This year is no exception. Despite reports of rich harvests across various provinces, farmers once again face the same challenges: an oversaturated market, limited preservation options, and inadequate pricing.

This reality underscores the urgent need for reform and modernization in Afghanistan's agricultural system.

To move forward, experts suggest two strategic responses: one that targets the long-term transformation of the sector, and another aimed at addressing immediate needs.

The long-term solution lies in shifting Afghanistan's traditional farming practices toward an industrialized model. This would involve establishing modern food processing and packaging facilities across the country.

Such infrastructure would allow fresh fruits and vegetables to be turned into value-added products—such as dried fruits, juices, jams, and pickled goods—helping farmers command better prices and tap into new markets.

These facilities would not only increase the shelf life of perishable goods but also create job opportunities and stimulate rural economies.

Equally important is the development of cold storage systems in key agricultural zones. These facilities would enable farmers to store their produce longer, helping them avoid selling at low prices during market gluts.

With better storage options, farmers could wait for more favorable market conditions, thus protecting their profits and reducing waste.

In tandem with industrialization, diversifying the country's export markets is crucial. Currently, Afghan farmers are heavily reliant on a few neighboring markets, making them vulnerable to political and logistical disruptions.

By exploring new international markets and developing alternative transit routes, Afghanistan could reduce this dependency and ensure more stable demand for its agricultural goods.

Export diversification would not only help mitigate risks tied to local market fluctuations but also open doors to higher-paying markets.

This broader access would provide Afghan farmers with the stability and security they need to grow their businesses and invest in better practices.

While long-term reforms are being planned and implemented, immediate steps must be taken to support farmers facing current economic difficulties.

One of the most effective short-term interventions is the provision of government subsidies or financial aid.

These could help cover farmers' losses during peak harvest times when prices plummet, ensuring that they can continue their work without falling into debt.

Additionally, government-led market stabilization efforts—such as price supports or strategic crop purchasing—could play a crucial role in balancing supply and demand.

By purchasing excess produce directly from farmers, authorities can reduce oversupply and help maintain reasonable market prices.

Another impactful short-term measure would be launching nationwide public awareness campaigns aimed at promoting the consumption of locally produced fruits and vegetables.

Encouraging Afghan citizens to buy domestic produce not only supports local farmers but also fosters national pride and strengthens the country's food sovereignty.

See P4

Nutritional emergency; a threat to Afghan children

Concerning reports about the spread of nutrional emergency among Afghan children are making hot topics of media in the country.

As the local TOLOnews TV reported, Seyda, a resident of Nangarhar, says her infant has been suffering from malnutrition for the past six months and is currently hospitalized at Indira Gandhi Hospital in Kabul.

She complains about her dire economic situation, saying she cannot afford the treatment expenses for her child.

Seyda explained that: "I'm from Jalalabad. My child has been malnourished for four months. My husband collects scrap. We can't manage anymore. Our financial situation is terrible, we can't even afford milk."

Similarly, Sabera, a resident of Helmand, shares: "It's been two or three months since my child fell ill. I had him hospitalized in Helmand for a month. I treated him at home for another month. Now I've brought him here."

Meanwhile, a report from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states that one in two Afghan children suffers from malnutrition. The global agency adds that Afghanistan ranks fourth worldwide in terms of severe food insecurity, with 90% of children under five lacking access to sufficient and nutritious food.

UNICEF's representative in Afghanistan, Tajudeen Oyewale, notes: "Nearly half of all Afghan children under five suffer from stunting or chronic malnutrition, and 10.3% are wasted (low weight for height). According to our latest report on food insecurity, 90% of Afghan children under five are food insecure. Globally, it is estimated that 440 million children under five suffer from food insecurity, and Afghanistan is among the worst-hit countries, ranking fourth in the world for food insecurity."

He added: "UNICEF is pleased to launch the 'First Foods' strategy in Afghanistan as an innovative initiative to improve children's health and well-being by promoting locally produced and processed nutritious foods. This initiative will help ensure proper dietary combinations for children at the household level. We believe this is the best approach to reduce malnutrition through a preventative strategy."

Concerns over high rates of malnutrition among Afghan mothers and children come amid repeated warnings from various UN agencies about rising malnutrition levels and calls on the international community to take joint action to address the crisis.

Previously, the UNICEF reported that Afghan children are mostly suffering from food poverty.

It said a high percentage of Afghan young children in Afghanistan face food poverty, and thousands of them are at risk of death due to malnutrition.

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has described malnutrition as one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the country.

Diana, the mother of a malnourished child, said: "I couldn't feed this child or even myself. I had another child to feed too. We didn't have good food, and I had to wean this one off. Now he's malnourished." UNICEF ranks Afghanistan as the fourth worst country globally for child food poverty, reporting that 90% of young children in the country struggle with malnutrition.

With support from the Commonwealth and the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), UNICEF has launched the "First Foods Afghanistan" initiative. The program aims to improve the diets of children under two by transforming food and nutrition systems and ending child food poverty, intending to reach 1.7 million children nationwide.

Tajudeen Oyewale, UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, stated: "We are shifting the focus from calories to nourishment through child sensitive food systems, and from addressing malnutrition solely through services to also prioritizing the actual foods young children consume.

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SPORTS

Amo Sharks begin Shpageeza Cricket League with a dominant victory

The Amo Sharks cricket team made a strong start in the 10th edition of the Shpageeza Cricket League, securing a convincing win in their opening match.

Facing the Bost Defenders, Amo Sharks showcased a powerful performance, defeating their opponents by 6 wickets.

The match, which marked the beginning of this year's highly anticipated T20 tournament, saw the Amo Sharks dominate both with the bat and the ball. After winning the toss and opting to bowl first, Amo's bowlers put on a disciplined display, restricting the Bost Defenders to a modest total.

In reply, the Amo Sharks chased down the target with ease, losing only four wickets in the process.

The team's top-order batters played crucial roles, demonstrating confidence and control under pressure. Their effective run chase reflected the team's solid preparation and strategic execution.

This victory has given the Amo Sharks a valuable early advantage in the tournament, boosting their confidence as they head into the next rounds. The team's balanced performance in all departments—batting, bowling, and fielding—signals that they are strong contenders in this year's competition.

Fans and analysts alike were impressed by the team's cohesion and energy. The win sets a positive tone for their campaign in the league, raising expectations for upcoming matches. With such a commanding start, the Amo Sharks have firmly announced their presence in the 2025 Shpageeza Cricket League.

The Kabul Times

Volleyball tournament kicks off in Ghor

A local volleyball competition featuring eight top teams has officially kicked off in Pasaband district of Ghor province. The tournament is being organized by the local representative of the National Volleyball Federation, in coordination with the Directorate of Physical Education and Sports of Ghor.

The opening match saw a strong performance from Team Shaheen, who dominated their opponents, the Central High School team, with a clean sweep of 3-0 to claim their first victory of the tournament.

According to the organizers, the competition will last for one week. It aims not only to promote the sport of volleyball in the region, but also to strengthen unity and cooperation among the youth.

Local residents and sports enthusiasts have welcomed the initiative, calling it a positive step toward youth engagement and community development in the area. Pasaband, a remote district in Ghor, rarely sees such organized sports events, making this tournament a source of excitement and pride for many locals.

Officials hope that the event will serve as a platform to identify talented players and eventually pave the way for broader participation of Ghor's youth in national-level sports. The tournament continues throughout the week with more matches expected to draw in large crowds and enthusiastic support from the community.

This grassroots effort reflects a growing interest in sports across rural Afghanistan and highlights the potential of athletic programs to bring people together, especially in underserved and less-developed regions.

The Kabul Times

22-team football tournament wraps up in Khost

A local football tournament featuring 22 teams recently concluded in the Matun area of Khost province, with the Gurbuz Border Team emerging as the champions. The competition, held in the Kandayoo region of Khost's provincial capital, had attracted football enthusiasts and local supporters over the course of several weeks.

The final match brought together two strong contenders: the Gurbuz Border Team and the Sahra Coordination Team. Both teams displayed excellent teamwork and competitive spirit throughout the game. By the end of regular time, the match was tied 1-1, pushing the game into a dramatic penalty shootout to determine the winner.

In the penalty round, the Gurbuz Border Team held their nerves and outscored their opponents 5-4, clinching the championship title. The victory was celebrated enthusiastically by players, coaches, and fans, who hailed the team's consistent performance throughout the tournament.

The tournament not only provided a platform for young athletes to showcase their talent but also served to strengthen community engagement and encourage a culture of sportsmanship in the region.

Local sports officials praised the successful organization of the event and emphasized the importance of such activities in promoting physical fitness and unity among youth.

Spectators and community leaders expressed appreciation for the tournament, noting that it brought energy and excitement to the area. The positive response from the public has encouraged organizers to plan more such events in the future, with the hope of identifying rising football talent and fostering a strong sports culture in Khost and neighboring districts.

This grassroots initiative is part of a broader effort to support youth development and provide constructive outlets for recreation in Afghanistan's southeastern provinces.

The Kabul Times

Afghanistan's trade reaches to more than 100 world countries, official says

KABUL: Afghanistan's trade network has expanded to more than 100 countries, with a total trade volume of $13 billion over the past year, said Nooruddin Azizi, the acting Minister of Industry and Commerce, during a press conference on Saturday.

Sharing his-led ministry's annual achievements in a news meeting held at the Government Media and Information Center, Azizi said that Afghanistan is currently home to 6,500 operational factories producing 572 various goods.

"Afghanistan has attained self-sufficiency in over 100 products, and approximately 8 million tons of goods were transported abroad last year," Azizi said.

The acting minister also spoke about a growing interest among investors in Afghanistan, with over 2,000 investors visiting the country in recent years.

Azizi said: "The government has allocated 80,000 acres of land for industrial purposes nationwide, an initiative that has significantly attracted investment towards Afghanistan."

The Government Annual Achievements Program is held to highlight the progress, key accomplishments, and development initiatives made by various ministries and institutions over the past year, aiming to promote transparency, accountability, and public awareness.

The Kabul Times

UN refugee agency warns funding cuts may leave 11 million without aid

More than 11 million refugees risk losing access to humanitarian aid owing to a "dramatic" funding crisis, according to the United Nations refugee agency. The extent of UNHCR's funding shortfall was revealed in a report released on Friday, which said it had so far received only 23 percent of this year's goal of $10.6bn, projecting an overall budget of only $3.5bn by the end of the year to meet the needs of 122 million people. "Our funding situation is dramatic," Dominique Hyde, director of external relations for UNHCR, said. "We fear that up to 11.6 million refugees and people forced to flee are losing access to humanitarian assistance provided by UNHCR." While countries that have slashed contributions were not named in the report, the crisis has been compounded by a major reduction in funding from the United States, which provided 40 percent – more than $2bn – of the agency's total donations last year.

Since taking office in January, President Donald Trump's administration has made funding cuts to the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and its aid programmes worldwide in what it says is part of its broader plan to remove wasteful spending.

UNHCR said it has had to stop or suspend about $1.4bn worth of aid programmes, including a 60 percent reduction in financial aid and emergency relief supplies in many countries, including Sudan, Myanmar and Afghanistan. Critical areas such as medical aid, education, shelter, nutrition, and protection are among the services suffering deep cuts, said the report, entitled "On the Brink: The devastating toll of aid cuts on people forced to flee".

In Bangladesh, where Rohingya refugees have lived for years in overcrowded camps, education for some 230,000 children is at risk of being suspended.

Aljazeera

Nutritional emergency;...

From P3

This integrated approach is the only sustainable path to breaking the cycle of malnutrition and poverty in Afghanistan."

Omid Rahman Fazel, UNICEF spokesperson in Afghanistan, said: "The goal is to end food poverty in Afghanistan. UNICEF is covering 1.7 million children across all 34 provinces. This program also encourages families to use locally available, nutritious foods to prevent malnutrition in their children."

"We invite donors, partners, and communities to join UNICEF in this initiative to support young children with access to essential diverse foods in their crucial first years of life," said Robert Chatterton Dickson, acting UK ambassador to Afghanistan.

Dr. Mohammad Arif Hassanzai commented: "The root issue is that the household economy where the child lives must be strong. I urge both international and local organizations working in child nutrition to increase their efforts and support families with malnourished children. This way, not only the sick children but also others in the household can be protected."

According to UNICEF's 2025 report on child food poverty, 3.5 million young children suffer from acute wasting, with 1.4 million at risk of death.

Earlier this week, on Sunday, UNICEF, WHO, WFP, FAO, and UNFPA issued a joint statement calling for bold, coordinated action to combat the nutrition crisis among children and women in Afghanistan. Their data showed that 4 in 10 women suffer from malnutrition, and 9 in 10 children experience food poverty.

Monitoring Desk: Mashal Noori

Afghanistan's agricultural future...

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These campaigns could be led by government bodies, media outlets, religious leaders, educators, and other influencers, all working together to shift consumer behavior. Afghanistan's agricultural future hinges on collaboration. Government agencies must partner with the private sector, civil society, and international donors to implement both short-term relief efforts and long-term development plans. Investment in infrastructure, policy reform, and market access is essential, as is training farmers in modern agricultural techniques and business skills. If Afghanistan can successfully modernize its agricultural sector, the benefits will be far-reaching: rural communities will gain economic stability, the country's food security will improve, and national exports could increase significantly. By transforming challenges into opportunities through industrialization and strategic planning, Afghanistan can unlock the true potential of its agricultural heritage. The pathway to a resilient agricultural economy lies in combining immediate relief with visionary reform. With collective effort, Afghanistan can build a system where farmers not only survive—but thrive. **Ghulam Reza Omidi**

Kabul-Astana air route opens...

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• Trade Regulation Uncertainties: Fluctuating trade laws, opaque regulations, and inconsistent policy enforcement could discourage long-term investor commitment.

• Kazakh Risk Assessment Needs: For sustained cooperation, Kazakhstan requires accurate assessments of Afghanistan's security dynamics, export capacity, and market potential. This information is critical for informed decision-making and risk mitigation.

• Logistical and Operational Weaknesses: Afghanistan's current logistical frameworks are insufficient for high-intensity transit operations, and the institutional capacity for managing larger trade volumes needs strengthening.

To overcome these challenges and maximize the benefits of this partnership, the following steps are recommended:

1. Establish a Joint Transport and Trade Committee

Facilitate concerted follow-up and swift implementation of signed agreements between Kabul and Astana.

2. Deploy Transparent, Regionally Standardized Transport Systems

Launch integrated road and air transport networks that meet international best practices to ensure efficiency and reliability.

3. Streamline Visa Issuance for Business Travelers

Simplify entry procedures for traders and economic representatives from both countries to promote seamless commercial engagement.

4. Promote Afghan Export Products in Kazakhstan

Showcase agricultural goods, carpets, precious stones, dried fruits, and other Afghan exports at Kazakh trade fairs and markets to build market recognition.

5. Enhance Logistics and Transit Capacity

Provide training programs in logistics and international transport, in partnership with Kazakh institutions, to bolster human capital and technical expertise.

The Kabul–Astana corridor is more than a flight path—it signifies a crucial leap in Afghanistan's economic policy narrative. By linking air and ground transport routes, Afghanistan can transform into an essential transit hub in Central Asia's trade network.

This alignment with regional integration holds the promise of economic uplift, investor trust, and national prosperity.

The success of this ambition hinges on political will, regulatory transparency, and active private-sector engagement. If managed effectively, Kabul–Astana connectivity could serve as a foundation for Afghanistan to reestablish its place within the natural trade geography of Central and South Asia. In doing so, the nation may reclaim its historic role as a critical conduit of commerce.

Today, the direct flight between Kabul and Astana symbolically serves as a wing for Afghanistan's ascent, representing not just connectivity but a pathway to economic integration, national development, and reintegration into its regional identity.

Abu Ragheb Amani